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PLEDGING CONFERENCE FOR EMERGENCY
HUMANITARIAN RELIEF TO THE
PEOPLE OF KAMPUCHEA
5 November 1979

BACKGROUND INFORMATION IN CONNEXION WITH THE CONFERENCE

Addendum

World Food Programme

It is the responsibility of WFP to concentrate on the food aid aspects of the over-all emergency effort. UNICEF, the designated "lead agency", ICRC and WFP have nominally estimated that 2.5 million people, including 700,000 children and sick persons, are in extreme need of relief assistance in Kampuchea and along the border with Thailand. To provide these people with a minimum diet over the next six months, about 165,000 tons of food (mainly rice and pulses but also oil, sugar, fish, dried skim milk and enriched blended foods) will be required. Donor countries have so far made available to WFP 46,000 tons, of which over 32,000 tons are already being moved out. Taking into account food commodities provided by other organizations, the balance of food aid requirements is about 120,000 tons.

WFP has already distributed, or is in the process of delivering, food to the distressed population. Six thousand tons of rice and other food commodities have been distributed along the Kampuchean/Thai border. More commodities are on the way to the border area. Two vessels chartered by the Programme have discharged their cargoes totalling 5,000 tons of rice and three UNICEF trucks at the port of Kompong Som as the first WFP consignment to the Kampuchean population in Phnom Penh and surrounding areas. Two more vessels chartered by WFP with over 5,000 tons of rice are expected to arrive at Kompong Som early in November. Other shipments will follow.

The Programme has established a skeleton warehouse-storage-distribution network to reach those in need near the Kampuchean/Thai border comprising:

(i) a well-equipped warehouse in Bangkok in close proximity to the port with a capacity of about 3,500 tons (rice), which could, space permitting, be used by other donors;

(ii) three substorage warehouses near the border with capacities ranging from 500 to 1,500 tons, which could be easily serviced by WFP-rented 10-ton trucks; and

(iii) 15 distribution points in the border area, each with a capacity of about 300 tons (construction of which was partly financed with Norwegian and Swedish assistance) from which distribution to the affected population presently takes place.

There are considerable logistical difficulties, however, in reaching the population in Phnom Penh and surrounding areas. The capacity of the port of Kompong Som to receive relief shipments is severely hampered by lack of mechanical handling and off-loading facilities. First-hand experience of this problem is now being obtained with the arrival of the WFP-chartered vessels. These vessels are carrying handling equipment to facilitate discharge and delivery of their cargoes. This equipment will be left behind for use in the off-loading of other shipments provided by WFP and other donors. A WFP officer seconded to UNICEF, and located in Phnom Penh, will attend to receipt and delivery of commodities at Kompong Som.

Transport capacity from the port to Phnom Penh is also restricted, but this will increase with the arrival of a large number of UNICEF trucks in November-December. The opening up of the land route from Thailand is presently being explored by the Programme since it might prove essential for a more significant channelling of aid to the Phnom Penh area. Distribution of food within Kampuchea will be monitored by UNICEF in co-operation with ICRC.

In view of the tenuous and restricted logistical situation, all donors are urged to co-operate with WFP in seeking clearance and permits for suitable and acceptable tonnages for entry into Kompong Som and Phnom Penh. Using one administrative channel would ensure maximum co-ordination of relief supplies.

The services and expertise of the Programme relating to food purchase and transport are at the disposal of all countries and organizations wishing to contribute towards meeting Kampuchean emergency food needs. WFP has carried out a market survey and has drawn up a list of countries where the required commodities could be purchased. This information is available to all interested donors.

The WFP Bangkok office has been strengthened and will attend to all purchasing activities on behalf of the Programme in Thailand. The Thai authorities have given maximum priority to such purchases on concessional terms. They have also given special permission for export licences on a priority basis. The Programme has been assured that sufficient supplies of rice and smaller quantities of other commodities are available for purchase in Thailand to meet a large part of current estimated requirements.

The importance of co-ordinated action cannot be over-emphasized. UNICEF and ICRC have agreed that WFP should be responsible for all matters relating to emergency food aid to the Kampuchean people.

At an informal meeting in Rome of interested donor countries and organizations

called by the Executive Director on 26 October, there was agreement that it would be highly desirable that all food aid contributions to the Kampuchean people be channelled through WFP. The Programme would thus operate as the food centre of the relief effort. All present recognized the crucial need for co-ordinated efforts so that food donations and deliveries can be synchronized, logistical arrangements effectively used and duplication of efforts and congestion of port and transport systems avoided.

The donor countries and organizations present at the meeting held on 26 October recognized the need for WFP to play this co-ordinating role, as it had done for recent emergency food deliveries to the Sahel and elsewhere. The Programme will issue periodic reports to all contributors giving details of the emergency food operations for the Kampuchean people. It will be indispensable, however, for donors to provide timely information to WFP concerning their donations, shipping and delivery schedules and purchasing and procurement plans if the Programme is to perform an effective co-ordinating function.

We would like to take this opportunity to express appreciation of the co-operation of the Government of Thailand for making relief operations in Thailand possible and to the Government of Viet Nam for providing advice on the most effective ways of delivery supplies to Kampuchea.

We hope that it has been demonstrated that, within the limits of its resources, WFP is doing its part to help in this situation. We look forward to a constructive meeting during which we can all indicate, in tangible terms, our deep concern and involvement in this humanitarian enterprise.